

Road Improvements Reduce Commute Times
Council President Scott Peters, First District
For the Carmel Valley News, May 2007

For nearly three years, Carmel Valley has been home to the City's only freeway-to-freeway ramp meter, from State Route 56 to southbound Interstate 5. My office fielded hundreds of calls complaining about the miles-long backup on westbound 56. In 2004, I invited Caltrans to testify at the Council's Land Use & Housing Committee to explain why the meter lights were needed. The Committee encouraged Caltrans to find ways to adjust the timing of ramp meters to optimize traffic flow and reduce wait times for drivers.

In April of this year, the southbound bypass lanes on I-5 opened to traffic, improving commute times and reducing the need for morning and evening metering at this heavily-used interchange.

Caltrans traffic engineers closely monitored traffic flow on 56 and 5, around the bypass and other heavily-used interchanges. When the bypass first opened, ramp meters operated three hours each day. Using dynamic ramp metering, that was soon reduced to one hour per day. Drivers quickly learned to synch their commute to daily traffic patterns, and backups have dropped considerably since early April. Ramp meters will only be turned on during times of heavy traffic congestion, such as inclement weather and special events.

I want to thank Caltrans for responding to the needs of our community.

MAD about Del Mar Heights Road

In 2001, property owners in Torrey Pines began petitioning the City of San Diego to establish a maintenance assessment district ("MAD") to improve traffic safety and beautify the medians in their community. After more than five years of study and advocacy, the Del Mar Heights Landscaped Median project petition was circulated and signed by hundreds of area property owners, and endorsed by the Torrey Pines Community Planning Board in April. I promise to help the community establish the assessment district if the proposal is approved by voters this month.

For about \$23 dollars per year, plus small adjustments based on the San Diego Consumer Price index and maintenance costs, this neighborhood can have its own landscaping fund. The street landscaping will look as beautiful as the newer neighborhoods in Carmel Valley or Torrey Hills. Given the importance of property values, assessment districts enjoy strong support around the City. In the past few years, MAD's were approved for busy roads in Bird Rock and Torrey Pines Mesa.

A MAD also has the potential to bring new money into the Torrey Pines community. Del Mar Heights Road is eligible for Transnet funding through the San Diego Association of

Governments (“SANDAG.”) Many other projects in the County compete for this funding. According to City Engineering staff, the formation of a MAD will give the project a better chance of securing Transnet funding as well as making it a higher priority for local funding.

For any outstanding questions on this proposal, I urge you to contact my Torrey Pines Representative, Chanelle Hawken at (619) 236-6979 or the Torrey Pines Community Planning group at www.torreypinescommunity.org. And check your mail; ballots go out mid-May. Voters have 45 days to return them to the City.